

Draft

PD – 7: Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Introduction

The Northern Shenandoah Valley Region (PD 7) receives planning support from Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission. The region is approximately 1,650 square miles encompassing the northwest corner of Virginia between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the eastern slopes of the Appalachia Mountains. Massanutten Mountain is located in the heart of the region. The lower sections of the North and South forks of the Shenandoah River crisscross the landscape before converging at Front Royal to create the legendary Shenandoah River. Many of the headwater streams in this region eventually create the mighty Potomac River.

The region's economy is driven by a diverse blend of agriculture, tourism, and industry. Since the area was first settled, agriculture has been the mainstay of the Shenandoah Valley. During the Civil War, the Valley was described as the breadbasket of the Confederacy, and more than 300-armed conflicts were waged throughout the area. With the construction of Interstate 81, the Valley began to acquire manufacturing and other industry. During the past 20 years, the Shenandoah Valley and nearby mountain attractions have become popular tourist destinations, generating significant economic benefits. Due to vast tracts of forests, national parks, numerous water resources, the Skyline Drive, historic battlefields and other recreational and historic interests, the region welcomes large influxes of visitors for across the state, the nation and around the world.

Geographic characteristics

The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission is in the northern and western region of Virginia. Its members include five counties, one city and 14 town governments: the counties of Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah and Warren, the City of Winchester, and the towns of Berryville, Boyce, Middletown, Stephens City, Luray, Shenandoah, Stanley, Edinburg, Mount Jackson, New Market, Strasburg, Toms Brook, Woodstock and Front Royal. The region's northern boundary is the West Virginia – Virginia Line, the eastern boundary is the Blue Ridge, the southern boundary is Rockingham County and the western border is the Great North Mountain and the West Virginia – Virginia Line. The region is one of broad contrasts with both suburban development, industry and agricultural and forestlands nestled in the valley and on the rolling slopes of the mountains. In several of the counties the population density per square mile rivals more developed counties, like Loudoun and Prince William Counties. The topography also varies from the rolling Shenandoah Valley to the mountains that mark the eastern and western boundaries.

Demographics

The region's 2000 Census population was 185,282 people. The region's population grew by almost 16.4% during the last decade above the 14.4 percent statewide growth rate. Frederick County has had the most significant change in population, followed by Shenandoah, Clarke and Page. Most of the growth in PD 7 is due to in-migration. The population for the region is anticipated to grow to 235,900 by 2020 representing just less than 16% increase in growth from 2005. Although much of the region is considered rural, none of the counties rank agriculture as the top economic activity. Manufacturing is one of the primary economic generators in Shenandoah and Frederick Counties. Many of the region's workers are employed outside their home counties in Washington D.C. or the Northern Virginia area. Increasingly, Northern Shenandoah's mountain and valley images are giving way to development that is eroding the distinctive qualities of the Northern Shenandoah Valley. Commitment to resource-based tourism, public access to the areas waterways and to the quality of life in the area will help maintain the Northern Shenandoah Valley's unique character and economic stability.

Demand/survey findings

Draft VOP – PD 7- Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Page 1

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As indicated in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* (VOS), the most popular outdoor activities in the region are walking for pleasure, driving for pleasure and jogging or running, respectively. Though water related activities ranked high statewide, swimming outdoors and fresh water fishing were the only water related activities that ranked in the top ten participation rates. Generally, as across the state, there was a large drop in overall participation for all activities since the 2002 VOS. The most dramatic drop in activity participation was in bicycling. The second largest drop was in lake and river use because water access is not available to meet the population's demand. The VOS indicated this region also needs access to trails and natural areas. The survey for PD 7 shows a surplus of some outdoor recreation resources, primarily hiking trails and acres for hunting. The extra resources do serve users from adjacent regions, tourists and visitors. One unusual finding is the dramatic drop in demand for developed campsites and the increase in tent campsite demand. While the regional demand for these resources may not be high, external users and an increase tent camping, which is significantly less expensive than RV camping may have resulted in this trend for the region. In addition, public playgrounds and public swimming pools were listed as desired community amenities continue to be needed throughout the region.

As localities plan to meet outdoor recreational needs for their residents they are encouraged to include small neighborhood parks, larger regional facilities and trails linking communities and water access points. The 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and inventory show a need for additional active recreation facilities, especially basketball courts, baseball fields and multipurpose fields for soccer and football. In addition, PD 7 remains an area where activities that require large land bases, like hunting and off road motorcycling, are popular. In fact participation in hunting rose since the last survey, while statewide the participation rate dropped. Though there are excess lands available for hunting, additional lands need to be made available for off-road motorcycle and four-wheel driving. Other areas of need for recreational activities include access to water for boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and swimming. Trails, blueways and greenways linking existing recreational, historic, cultural, and natural resources could increase the number of miles of trails suitable for walking, bicycling and boating. In addition, continuing to promote and form linkages between historical, scenic and cultural resources is supported by survey results that indicate statewide that visiting historic sites is second in popularity to walking for pleasure.

Specific needs have been identified in the Northern Shenandoah Valley region. These include:

- Water access sites for fishing, boating, swimming and beach access.
- Tent camping facilities.
- Use of playgrounds.
- Large tracts of land open for off road motorcycling.
- Multipurpose fields for soccer and football.

Despite the apparent abundance of certain types of recreational resources, shortages exist for close-to-home facilities that are important to local residents. Existing and projected facility needs for the region are summarized in [Table 9, page ____](#).¹

The following recommendations could contribute to regional open space and/or recreational opportunities for meeting current and future needs of area residents.

¹ Blue Highlighted sections need additional information or clarification.

Outdoor Recreation

The face of outdoors recreation is changing. The variety of activities offered, demanded and provided has increased. Both public and private venues need to meet new demands by providing activities like disc golf, skateboarding, spelunking and extreme sports including rock climbing and paintball. PD 7 is also seeing a change in the makeup of its community with higher minority populations, especially Shenandoah and Winchester, which have the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the region. With this as a consideration, and with the expectation that these numbers will increase, the following are recommended.

- Better serve Latino and Spanish speaking cultural groups, it is important to: establishing trust relationships; hire bilingual staff; advertise in the Spanish media; host Latino-themed events; create programs with the community, not for them. Invite, involve and include Hispanics in all aspects of service delivery. Similar strategies are effective for other cultural groups.
- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.
- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban and suburban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.

Land Conservation

The land conservation map for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms.

Within PD 7, protected lands include about 2,300 acres of state lands and more than 168,400 acres of federal lands.²

(See Chapter III. Land Conservation)

² Yellow Highlighted sections are from the 2002 VOP and need to be confirmed as relative statements.

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Land Trusts Operating in the PD

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Potomac Conservancy
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- Kernstown Battlefield Association, Inc
- Valley Conservation Council

End Textbox]

General recommendations for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in Chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

- 1) Protect the lands within the **Greenway Rural Historic District** or adjacent to it.
- 2) Protect the lands adjacent to **Skyline Drive** and the **Appalachian Trail (AT)** and create a trail buffer for viewsheds and environmental resources.

Green Infrastructure

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.
- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

General trails and greenways recommendations for this planning region include:

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

Specific Trails and greenways recommendations include:

- 3) The National Park Service Rivers and Trails Technical Assistance will continue assistance with development of a regional green infrastructure strategy with **Redbud Run Greenway** near Winchester as a case study.
- 4) A greenway should be developed along the **Shenandoah River** to connect the state park with other resources.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in Virginia include:

- Develop and protect a corridor for **The Great Eastern Trail** through the Northern Shenandoah Region. The Great Eastern Trail will link existing trails from central Alabama to central New York along the Allegheny Highlands. The Southeast Foot Trails Coalition and the Mid Atlantic Foot Trail Coalition are undertaking this project, which is being sponsored by the American Hiking Society. This includes parts of the **Tuscarora Trail** (formerly the Big Blue) as it crosses Shenandoah and Frederick counties.
- The **Appalachian Trail** is an existing National Scenic Trail. Because of this special designation, localities that host the Appalachian Trail should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing overlooks and

other scenic values of the corridor. For more than 75 years the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs have worked voluntarily with federal, state and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management, overcrowding, and maintenance of the trail.

- Implement the **Walking and Wheeling Plan** for the Northern Shenandoah Valley, which was adopted in 2004.
- Continue development of the **Green Circle** in Winchester connecting Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve to Apple Blossom Mall and Old Town Winchester.

5) A private conservation organization is attempting to purchase the **Norfolk Southern Railway** in Shenandoah County to operate an historic steam excursion train. This facility, if developed, could provide a combination recreation/tourism facility that could become a tourist destination for the northern Valley. Additional funding is needed in order to complete the plan as proposed in the recent feasibility study.

6) Continue efforts to relocate the **Tuscarora Trail** in Shenandoah and Frederick counties off the public roads and provide additional protection for the relocated sections.

Blueways & Water Access

Beach Access Recommendations

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Blueway Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
 - Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
 - Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.
 - Develop a managed blueway system of access and recreational use areas.
- 7) Extend and develop blueways along both the **North and South Forks of the Shenandoah**.

Water Access Recommendations

- Develop a strategy to provide access opportunities at the VDOT Rights-of-Ways bridge crossings.
- Additional public beach access in this region is also needed. Some of the need for this type of access could be met by making small beaches available at public access points.
- Identify and develop appropriate water access opportunities to the public waters and free-flowing recreational rivers in the region.
- As more public water access achieved, create clean up days and education on litter and dumping to preserve water quality for all users.

- Implement the **Floating and Fishing Plan** for the Shenandoah Valley; a comprehensive plan for showcasing opportunities for river protection and use, while coordinating efforts of the Walking and Wheeling Plan for PD 7.
 - As the primary agency responsible for providing boating access to the public waters of the commonwealth, DGIF should coordinate with all land managers and user groups to identify locations and help to develop additional access sites that are needed on the free flowing streams of the region.
- 8) Additional public access is needed to all the major streams of the region, including both the North and South forks and the main stem of the **Shenandoah River, Passage Creek and Cedar Creek**. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles.

Historic and Landscape Resources

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

Specific Historic and Landscape Resources recommendations include:

- 9) Implement the 2000 **Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District** (SVBNHD) Management Plan to promote the protection and continued appreciation of the historic, cultural, and natural resources that are associated with the battlefields
- 10) Develop a corridor management plan, and create a historic district for the protection of the **Valley Road**, which generally follows the Route 11 corridor.

Scenic Resources Recommendations

Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents. It also reflects the ecological health of the region.

Skyline Drive one of the major resources of PD 7 has recently seen several of its sections altered from that of a pastoral scene to landscapes that are sometimes marked by incompatible development. Overlooks, that once featured breathtaking vistas of farmsteads or forests, are now obscured by haze originating from distant factories, or now reveal factories and expanding suburban residential development. In some cases, subdivisions are being developed within a few hundred feet of this magnificent corridor. As development continues to expand in these sensitive areas near the park, there will be major impacts on the quality of the visitor experience. Those communities that benefit most from the presence of the park with its scenic highways should consider strengthening local comprehensive plans and creating special zoning regulations that will take into account the unique scenic and economic benefits associated with the parkway and Skyline Drive and their viewsheds.

Local governments are beginning to recognize the value of viewsheds as an enhancement to their quality-of-life as well as an asset that turns local attractions into tourist destinations.

Draft VOP – PD 7- Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Page 7

voppd07.doc

General recommendations for scenic resources include:

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

Specific recommendations for scenic resources include:

11) Localities that lie within the viewshed of the **Skyline Drive** should work to protect the scenic views. The National Park Service has developed viewshed management and landscape design guidelines that may be useful in this endeavor.

12) Scenic overlays for the **SVNBHD, the Shenandoah National Park, the Appalachian Trail, and George Washington and Jefferson National Forest** should be considered as part of a multi-regional viewshed planning process.

13) Protection of the **AT** viewshed corridor is critical to preserving the wilderness experience for hikers.

14) **Interstate 81** is a recognized scenic corridor by the American Automobile Association. It is a major gateway and travel corridor through the state. Care should be given to protecting this great resources and showcase of Virginia.

15) Protect **agricultural land along Route 340** corridor in Page County.

16) Protect the **Overall Run wildlife corridor** in Warren and Page Counties.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection.

Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII.

On September 22, 2005, for the first time ever four new national byway designations were given to Virginia roads. Skyline Drive, within PD 6, received National Scenic Byway status. These designations allow localities along the routes to access federal dollars for byway corridor projects (see Chapter VI. Funding). These major scenic highways attract tourists from throughout the nation, as well as international visitors. The character of Skyline Drive has been altered from that of a pastoral scene to landscapes that are sometimes marked by incompatible development and unhealthy forests. Overlooks that once featured breathtaking vistas of farmsteads or forests, now reveal factories and exploding suburban residential development. As development continues to expand in these sensitive areas, there will be major impacts on the quality of the visitor experience.

Protection of the scenic viewsheds and natural, historical and cultural resources for scenic corridors is critical to the continued beauty and uniqueness of these corridors and their environs.

Following are general and specific recommendations for scenic roads:

- Protection of **Skyline Drive**, a recently designated National Byway, is an integral element of Shenandoah National Park. The vistas and natural and cultural resources of the Park, create a peaceful and convenient refuge for visitors.

Draft VOP – PD 7- Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Page 8

voppd07.doc

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.
- The DGIF should continue to work with regional and local governments and other organizations to encourage additional marketing and enhancements to Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail sites. Ecotourism is an important component in promoting natural resource conservation.

Specific roads to be studied are recommended for into the Virginia Scenic Byway Program:

- 17) **Route 42** from near Edinburg in Shenandoah County to near Harrisonburg in Rockingham County, as well as the section south of Harrisonburg to the Augusta County line.
- 18) **Route 678** in Shenandoah County between Route 211 and Route 55 near Strasburg.
- 19) Designate the historic Valley Road, which generally follows the **Route 11 corridor**, as a Virginia Scenic Byway. For sections of Route 1 that do not qualify for Virginia byway designations alternative routes need to be identified to provide a continuous road corridor.
- 20) **Routes 340 and 211** in Page County.
- 21) **Route 211** in Shenandoah County.
- 22) **Routes 628, 622, 600, 690, and 681** in Fredrick County.

Scenic River s

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In PD 7 there is currently one designated scenic river segment; Shenandoah in Warren and Clarke Counties. In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.
- DCR should work with NPS or ISFS on designating qualified rivers for National Wild and Scenic designation.
- **The North Fork of the Shenandoah, the South Fork of the Shenandoah, Cedar Creek**, and two segments of **Passage Creek** identified in the USDA Forest Service's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as eligible for study for federal Wild and Scenic River designation. Should this process proceed, DCR will work with the Forest Service to determine if these rivers should be designated.

The following river segments have been evaluated and qualify as Virginia Scenic Rivers:

- 23) The **North Fork of the Shenandoah River** from Burnshire Bridge to Route 648 in Front Royal.
- 24) The **South Fork of the Shenandoah River** from Goodes Mill to Overall.

The following river segments are recommended for evaluation to determine suitability for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

- 25) The **South Fork of the Shenandoah River** in Rockingham, Page and Warren counties from Port Republic to Route 684, and from Overall to Front Royal.
- 26) The **North Fork of the Shenandoah River** in Shenandoah and Warren counties from Cedar Creek to Front Royal and from New Market to Burnshire Bridge.
- 27) **Cedar Creek** in Shenandoah, Frederick and Warren counties -- the entire stream.

Watershed Resources

Draft VOP – PD 7- Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Page 9

voppd07.doc

The Northern Shenandoah is in the Shenandoah watershed, which flows into the Potomac and then into the Chesapeake Bay. The water quality of this watershed is critical to the health of the Potomac and the Bay. With the recent challenges from diminished water quality and fish kills, the health of the watershed is important to the recreational and economic vitality of the region.

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Watershed groups operating in PD 7:

- Shenandoah Public Water Forum
 - (List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft)
- End Textbox]

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

- Outdoors Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.
- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.
- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

Federal Facilities

National Parks Recommendations

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.

28) **Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park** should continue to work with state and local partners to update and develop a General Management Plan (GMP), to guide park management for the next 20 years. The GMP is scheduled for completion in 2008. As infill for the park progresses, NPS should partner with localities to seek out opportunities for land acquisition and development of adjacent lands to meet local recreational needs should occur.

29) **Shenandoah National Park** has a revised Resource Management Plans contain strategies for addressing management and resource issues. Some of the issues that impact the availability and quality of recreational resources for future park visitors are: large attendance of visitors is taxing some of the resources during peak periods, over-utilized resources and user conflicts, significant threats to the health of the park's environment – including outbreaks of diseases or infestation by insects that are decimating large tracts of valuable forestland, problems associated with certain wildlife species overpopulation, land use conflicts at the park boundaries, and the loss of scenic vistas due to declining air quality need to be addressed.

30) The City of Winchester in conjunction with NPS and will complete and implement the **Winchester-Frederick Bike-Pedestrian plan**.

National Forests (USFS) Recommendations

The U. S. Forest Service should:

- Continue to develop new partnerships to market recreational opportunities and rural economic development through tourism; work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia's Blue Ridge Highlands Tourism, Inc., Shenandoah Valley Tourism Association, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to

develop regional and international marketing strategies to showcase Virginia's outdoor recreation opportunities.

- Continue to place program emphasis on areas designated by Congress such as the **Appalachian National Scenic Trail** and **Wilderness Areas**.
- Continue implementation of the **George Washington and Jefferson National Forest** Revised Land and Resource Management Plan identifies additional resources necessary to support the existing demand for dispersed recreational opportunities in the forest. The revised goals and objectives call for the forest to operate with a more balanced approach -- open space, conservation and recreation having equal weight with other forest activities. Additional facilities called for by the forest plan include trails, camping, water access, natural resource interpretation and environmental education. These resources will result in new and improved recreational facilities for forest visitors.

Other Federal Lands

31) The **Conservation and Research Center** near Front Royal contains several thousand acres and is operated by the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoological Park. Activities at the center focus on biodiversity conservation through programs in research, national and international training, and captive breeding of endangered species. The Conservation and Research Center is closed to the public, however, conference facilities are available for use by outside groups on a fee basis. Localities could take advantage of the unique meeting facilities available at the center.

State Facilities

State Parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement. An advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, convenes to participate throughout the master planning process. Public meetings are held to gain public input in addition to the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation, also open to the public. Any significant change to a state park master plan or park additions in excess of \$500,000 requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

32) Continue the implementation of the approved mater plan for **Raymond R. "Andy Guest" Jr. Shenandoah River State Park**. The plan calls such facilities as camping, cabins, an extensive trails network, a visitor center and environmental educational facilities, as well as enhanced access to the river.

33) The **Seven Bends Area** of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River in Shenandoah County has beautiful scenery and excellent fishing and canoeing in a pristine setting. The area could provide a rare opportunity for the acquisition and development of a multi-purpose river park that could contain significant historic and natural features, and would afford easy access to import resources of the region, including several near-by battlefields.

Draft VOP – PD 7- Northern Shenandoah Valley Region

Page 11

voppd07.doc

This site would provide an excellent opportunity to serve the conservation, recreation and environmental education needs of the region.

State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for nature study, birdwatching, hunting and fishing.
- DGIF should establish a state fish and game management area on the **Shenandoah River** to serve the conservation and recreation needs of the region.
- As the primary agency responsible for providing boating access to the public waters of the commonwealth, DGIF should coordinate with all land managers and user groups to identify locations and help to develop additional access sites that are needed on the free flowing streams of the region.

Wildlife Management Areas

- The DGIF should continue to investigate opportunities to acquire in-holdings in their WMA's and to improve each area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation. They should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.
- The DGIF should consider acquiring additional lands to provide access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.

34) DGIF should continue to investigate opportunities at the **Red Bud Run WMA** to acquire in-holdings and to improve the area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation.

State Forests Recommendations

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

Natural Areas

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of November 2006, documented 408 occurrences of 166 rare species and natural communities in the Northern Shenandoah Planning District. Thirty-six species are globally rare and five are federally threatened or endangered. Eighty conservation sites have been identified in the district; 60 (75%) have received some level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only **XX** sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve. Within the Lord Fairfax Planning District, DCR is particularly interested in protecting:

- Protect significant caves and karst areas.

- Protect habitat for the state-threatened wood turtle.
- Continue land conservation and water quality protection efforts along Buffalo Marsh Run and around Ogdens Cave in Frederick County.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. The Natural Heritage Program subsection is in Chapter IX.

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.
- Support inclusion of bicycle routes into local comprehensive plans.
- Complete and implement the **Winchester-Frederick Bike-Pedestrian plan**.
- Implement the **Main Street bile plan** for Berryville and Clarke County.

Other State Facilities

35) **Blandy Farm and State Arboretum** includes 150 acres in Clarke County. Blandy Farm is known to provide visitors a quality experience. Plans for an information and visitors center, an amphitheater, picnic facilities, gardens and garden walks accessible for persons with disabilities.

36) The **Northern Virginia 4-H Center**, located in Warren County, has numerous trails and other facilities that are used by others, including hikers on the nearby Appalachian Trail. There may be an opportunity to develop a cooperative agreement among groups expanding use of this site.

Local & Regional Parks & Recreation

Local Parks and Recreation Departments

The full time parks and recreation departments serve a vast majority of citizens across the state and are charged with planning for the long term recreation, park and open space needs of a community. All of the localities in the Northern Shenandoah Valley Region are served by a parks and recreation department. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Clarke \$44.92, Frederick \$53.02, Page \$4.54, Shenandoah \$16.80, Warren \$30.31, and Winchester \$78.68. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

- Localities should continue appoint and use a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs.

- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems, and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores. http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks

37) Implement the Front Royal Parks & Recreation Plan for Front Royal, **Where the Mountains Meet the River.**

Regional parks and other resources

- Shenandoah County has received funds to purchase a 150-acre parcel near the confluence of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and Cedar Creek. This critical location on the river and its close proximity to the national forest give the park a regional significance that can support a variety of recreational opportunities. Shenandoah County should initiate the design and development process as soon as the resources can be identified.
- The Avtex Fibers Plant is a Super Fund site on the Shenandoah River at Front Royal. It is being redeveloped into a “green” industrial park. A recreational park, **Conservancy Park** is part of the site rehabilitation and consists of almost 350 acres fronting the river. Park developments will include access to the river, restroom facilities, picnic areas, natural areas and open space, a trails network and a variety of other day-use activities, including soccer fields. Conservancy Park could help address issues identified in the recreational use management plan (see # 17). Funding for the park should be a part of the mitigation plan and as an early phase of the rehabilitation to be completed in 5-7 years.

Private Sector

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the region, which is a tourist, destination area. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential

growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Major resorts such as Massanutten and Bryce have made substantial investments in ski areas, golf courses, pools, campgrounds, lodging and other amenities for the recreating public. Increased interest in the numerous Civil War battlefield sites, many of which are privately owned, has created new opportunities for the heritage-tourism industry. Within the Northern Shenandoah Valley region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private-public arrangements and partnerships are evolving to protect, promote, and interpret the significant recreational, cultural and historic resources that are synonymous with the northern Valley. Private enterprise will have the primary responsibility to provide for the increased demand for future amenities throughout the region. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access.

Private Sector Recommendations

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- There is a demonstrated need for additional 4-wheel- drive off-road trails in the region. This may present an additional opportunity for the private sector to make use of marginal, undeveloped, private lands to create additional ORV trail opportunities.
- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.